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Supporting Children Anxious about Coronavirus

During times of crisis, including the recent public health concerns about COVID-19 (Coronavirus), it is natural for our anxieties to rise. Parents, who may be feeling unsettled themselves, are asking how they can help their children and teens during this time of uncertainty. Children look to adults to determine how to respond to a crisis, so it is important that parents and guardians model self-care and healthy coping skills. It is also essential that caregivers reassure children that we will protect them and do whatever is necessary to keep the family healthy and safe.

Children, like everyone, respond to stress in different ways. You know your child best and can be on the lookout for changes in mood or behavior. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has excellent information on [common behavioral changes](#) in children and the things that you can do to [support them](#) through this current public health situation.

The following are things that you can do proactively to support your children:

- **Be calm.** Even if you are feeling tense, try to speak with your children as calmly as possible. This will set the tone for ongoing conversations.
- **Be Available.** Make sure to check in with your child about how they are feeling. Help them express their feelings and to sort through the influx of information.
- **Be honest.** Your children are hearing information from multiple sources (media, friends) and much of this information is inaccurate or out of context. Arm yourself with the facts and, as appropriate, share this information with your child (keeping in mind their age and maturity level). Be mindful of limiting your children's exposure to the news on television and social media.
- **Offer guidance.** Be available as a resource to your children. Talk about wanting to see friends and family, and about managing new virtual school routines.
- **Provide structure.** Create a schedule for learning as well as fun and relaxation. The weather is starting to get warmer, and the days longer, so be sure to get outside for a walk or to play. Keeping your family busy will help alleviate stress and will provide an outlet for the release of physical, emotional and cognitive energy. As we all practice "physical distancing," keeping your kids busy will be different than normal. [Popsugar Family](#) has some great ideas.

As parents and guardians, you will also need a break. Many of us now need to work from home while also caring for our families. Be sure to reach out to other parents in your community and beyond to find out what they are doing and to share ideas and resources. Just because we are distancing ourselves from others, it does not mean that we need to be disconnected.

As we figure out how to keep our families and communities healthy, we need to be mindful of not scaring and overwhelming children. Both the [CDC](#) and [PBS](#) have resources with recommendations on ways to enlist your child's help without increasing their anxiety. Working together for the greater good will help all of us weather this storm.

Call Behavioral Health Consultants, LLC, your Employee Assistance Program, to speak with one of our counselors about your challenges and concerns regarding your child's anxiety. We are also here to help you as a parent and caregiver during this stressful period. Counselors are available 24/7. Contact BHC at: 800 864-2742 or 203 407-1029.

Behavioral Health Consultants, LLC
Employee Assistance Program

(203) 407-1029

Or Toll Free: 1 800 864-2742.

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